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The
Grandest Playground
in the World

JOHNSON



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THE GRANDEST PLAYGROUND IN THE WORLD

DELIVERED BEFORE THE ROCHESTER HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, APRIL 15, 1918

BY

ROSSITER JOHNSON, LL. D.

Our lives are little, but our times are great.
We come, we see, we linger, and we pass —
Weave but a single thread in web of state,
Or give the field a single blade of grass.
We are in action like a faried class,
Where each one stumbles through his dozen lines,
And looks bewildered at the stafford mass
Of foreign words and intricate designs —
But, lo! when all is done, through all are
Heads shined

R.J.

April 19, 1918.

Rosette Johnson



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FOREWORD.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven!

Few persons know how to be old. In a letter to Julia Ward Howe on her seventieth birthday, May 27, 1889, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote: "To be seventy years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old." Another has said: "To know how to grow old is the master-work of wisdom, and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living."

Rossiter Johnson comes to us as the apostle of youth, towering in the confidence of boyhood. The creator of Phaeton Rogers can never grow old, no matter what the calendar says. With Monkey Roe he still ties kites to the Baptist church steeple, clings to the rope of Red Rover Three with Phaeton, and cheers with delight when Cataract Eight is washed. Here he is, in "*The Grandest Playground in the World*," filled with joys and buoyancy. Here, with genuine heart interest, a genial, lovable personality reveals itself.

By his gentle enchantment this dreamer of dreams opens magic casements, as did the wizard to the northern king, and through the window we behold life at the Spring and forget the drear December of our days.

Rossiter Johnson has done our entire city a service because he has brushed aside the smoke and dust and given us a glimpse of a very dear Rochester. Under his poetic touch the old town becomes idealized, the city of heart's desire, guarded on every hand, walled by the flowers.

When at last the war is over, when "the tumult and the shouting dies," when our hearts come back with our boys, then we shall have time to live again and learn to love our city all the

more. And in that happy day the soul of Rochester must be sweetened by such rare spirits as Dr. Johnson, who can read love into our very bricks and stones.

June comes with him, and again

Sweetly the breezes stir
Roses of Rochester,
Crooning a song for her,
 Where river foams;
Throned o'er a region wide,
Regal in power and pride,
Never shall ill betide
 City of homes!

EDWARD R. FOREMAN,
*President of the
Society.*

THE GRANDEST PLAYGROUND IN THE WORLD

Our most eminent man of letters, now dean of the guild, in his first published novel designated Rochester as "the Enchanted City." Perhaps the enchantment was partly due, for him, to the fact that on his wedding journey he stood with his bride in a diminutive pagoda at Falls Field and by moonlight saw the historic Upper Falls of the Genesee.

But no Rochester boy of my day, who has spent much of his life elsewhere, and has a good memory, needs to open that book to be reminded of Rochester's peculiar charm. The city is rich and prosperous now—may she ever continue so!—then she was comparatively poor; but some of us think the English poet who so longed for, but seldom caught, "the light that never was, on sea or land," might have seen it frequently when the shadows of the summer clouds were passing over our city or resting in dreamy stillness on the face of Ontario.

One day when I sat in Central Park, my business harness thrown aside, I looked at a group of children in the playground, and my mind wandered back to the scenes and companions of my boyhood. Then it seemed to me that in all the wide world no boys could have quite so grand a playground as ours. The idea so strongly impressed me that when I returned to my desk I wrote the argument and the description. Let me have the privilege of reading it to you.

I know that in Central Park the small boys have their merry-go-rounds, and their older brothers have a beautiful ball-ground and tennis-courts, surrounded by everything lovely that the landscape artist can produce, while music from the band-stand floats across the lawns and through the trees. I know that the boys of Switzerland have the Alps, "the palaces of Nature," always impressive in sunlight or in shadow, always inviting to adventurous climbing and cultivation of manly courage. I know that the boys of Lapland hear "the sledges with the bells, silver bells," half the year, and enjoy such coasting as we never dream of. I know that the boys of the South-Sea islands disport themselves in the warm surf, and can stand on an old barrel stave and slide down the slope of the decuman; or chase a monkey up a tree and

throw stones at him till he answers with a bombardment of cocoanuts. I know that many of the boys of England play on historic ground, amid inspiring memorials of heroism and romance—roll their hoops and their marbles in the streets of Stratford, follow-my-leader through the shadows of Stonehenge, climb the peaks of Derbyshire, fight mimic battles and offer princely prizes for a hypothetical horse on Bosworth Field, or hide behind the monument that marks the spot where Harold was slain.

None of these privileges were ours—no mountains, no rolling surf, no municipal music, no historic associations, no landscape gardening (thank fortune!)—and only a comparatively short winter. But we had such a variety of delights as was not known to any of those boys. The city was small at that time, and bore marks of arrested growth. But it spanned a beautiful river, and in its centre there was a high, perpendicular cataraet, while a mile and a half below were two other falls; after which the stream pursued its way, unruffled, between high banks, until it was lost in Lake Ontario. Nobody knows what length of time was required for the river to cut its gorge through the solid sandstone and limestone. Geologists say from seventy to a hundred centuries. Until it arrived within a few feet of its present channel, it moved in a series of sigmoid curves from the upper to the lower falls. Then it resolved on straightening its course, and cut a channel that is like a bow-string to those curves. This left on each side two flats or intervals in the shape of a half moon, and opposite each the bank was steep—almost perpendicular.

Across the first of these flats the tail-races of a dozen flouring mills went bubbling and foaming and gurgling to “join the brimming river,” as if the bright water were glad to escape from the dark flumes and the toiling wheels and dance in the sunlight once more. When I was a very little fellow I went there alone one day to do my first fishing. As I looked at those lively streams it seemed to me that the fish there must be much cleaner than those in the deeper and darker waters of the river. There I cast my line, but I caught nothing, and lost all the tackle. The moral of that is, it is not always fortunate for one’s lines to be cast in pleasant places.

The next flat was on the east side of the river, and we considered that it belonged to the Dublin boys—so did they, very

emphatically. We did not care much about it, except that, as young archæologists, we wished we knew what prehistoric race of Rochesterians constructed those quadrilateral excavations, lined them with stone walls, and then did no more. Perhaps they were frightened away by that man with a gun who, on the spot where the Powers Building now stands, is shooting a bear in O'Reilly's "Sketches of Rochester."

The third flat, the most beautiful of all, was ours, on the west side. This bore several successive names, according to the owner. Once Draper's; in our day, Lucas's. Down from some undiscovered springs came a babbling brook, never dry, which ran under State Street, turned the wheels of Cawthra's woolen mill, and then in a pretty valley, parallel with the river, ran to the flat, crossed it, and ended in the river. At the top of its eastern bank was a sheer precipice of perhaps eighty feet—a wall of limestone, which the river had shaved down as with a knife. Here swallows were continually skimming past, and sometimes a boy, not a member of the Audubon Society, stood perilously near the edge and tried to strike them down with a switch or a bush. Perhaps those boys were training unconsciously for future ball play; but I never knew one that got on to the "curves" of those swallows.

Just south of this precipice the bank, though very steep, could be scaled, and the boys liked to descend it, because there was the best place for swimming. The clean rock bed of the river there had a large rectangular hollow, as if meant for the bathtub of the Cardiff giant, and across it the current ran with a braided surface. Two paths led down to this, ever remembered by all the boys, and described in rhyme by one of them. With your permission, I will read those rhymes:

The Indian Trail

In days agone, where rocky cliffs
Rise far above the river's vale,
There was a path of doubts and ifs—
We called it then the Indian Trail.

In ragged line, from top to base,
O'er shelving erag and slippery shale,
By brush and brier and jumping-placee,
Wound up and down the Indian Trail.

No girl, though nimble as a fawn,
No small-boy cautious as a snail,
No dog, no mule, no man of brawn,
Could safely tread that Indian Trail.

Beyond the age of childish toy,
Before the age of gun and sail,
The fearless and elastic boy
Alone could use the Indian Trail.

'Twas like a great commencement day,
Like change from little fish to whale,
From tearful March to smiling May,
When first you climbed the Indian Trail.

I've threaded many a devions maze,
And Alpine path without a rail,
Yet never felt such tipsy eraze
As touched me on the Indian Trail.

'Twas easy by the White Man's Path
For all the lofty cliff to seale ;
But boys returned from river bath
Preferred to take the Indian Trail.

Our younger brothers, who'd insist
Upon their rights of taggle-tail,
Were shaken off' and never missed
When once we reached the Indian Trail.

And those who plundered orchard crop
Regarded not the owner's hail,
But left him puzzled at the top,
While they went down the Indian Trail.

All this was years and years ago—
To count them now would not avail—
And every noble tree is low
That shadowed then the Indian Trail.

The beetling cliff—ah, what a sin!—
Is full of vaults for beer and ale;
The rocks are stained like toper's chin,
Where flourished once our Indian Trail.

They've stripped off every bush and flower,
From Vincent to Deep Hollow dale;
The charm is sunk, the memory sour—
There is no more an Indian Trail.

Far driven from our hunting-ground
On breezy hill and billowy swale,
Some wander still, but some have found
The skyward end of Indian Trail.

Dear boys! it takes away my breath,
To think how youth and genius fail.
Those grim pursuers, Time and Death,
Are baffled by no Indian Trail.

Life lends such comfort as it hath,
But labor wears and custom stale;
I plod all day the White Man's Path,
And dream at night of Indian Trails.

The owner of the flat was inclined to be good-natured and accommodating with the boys that played there; but he could not have had unbounded confidence in us, for when he planted an acre with choice peach trees he surrounded it with a high fence of sharp-pointed pickets. It was amusing to see his great watch-dog, whenever he spied us there, come tearing down from the house, like a bull of Bashan, as if he would eat a few of us and scatter the rest, and as soon as he arrived among the boys fraternize with them, enjoying their company and their caresses.

The very high banks below the lower falls, where not of precipitous rock, were covered with foliage. They were beautiful in their summer greenness, but to gaze down the long vista when they had assumed the autumnal colors was like looking into an immense kaleidoscope. I have since shuddered as I looked at some of the pathless points, in slight angles of the rocky walls where a little comrade and I clambered up and down—just to see whether we could.

There was another stream, larger than the brook I have mentioned, which came from springs in a distant meadow, flowed through a picturesque winding valley, and joined the river just above the Lower Falls. This was the Deep Hollow, and it alone would have furnished a most acceptable play-ground if we had had no other. Sassafras, slippery elm, butternuts, berries, whistle-wood, birch bark, sweet acorns, shinny sticks—we knew how to get them all from the fertile banks of the Deep Hollow. Small boys could take small fish from its waters, and they knew where to find safe swimming-pools that were shaded by overhanging trees.

A few yards beyond the Deep Hollow stood a small piece of the original forest that once covered this region. The great trees were very tall, and their first branches were far from the ground. Up and down and around their trunks ran the nimble squirrels, while many birds sang in the tops, and here and there an industrious woodpecker tapped the bark. When we lay on the leaf-covered ground and gazed at the fleecy clouds that floated past the openings, we could easily imagine ourselves in Fairyland.

To reach the Deep Hollow we crossed a great common. On two of its edges were a few houses, and all the central part was unoccupied. There we had free range. We could play ball, make bonfires, pitch tents, fire cannon, and indulge in various games. At one point there was a small stream, and on its banks were some hawthorn bushes that had grown to the dignity of trees and bore fruit almost as large as cherries and quite as palatable to the ordinary boy out of doors. At another point a gentle knoll was occupied by a grove of great chestnut trees. These were free to everybody, and the boys met with occasional adventures among them. On one occasion two boys had climbed one of the trees, when one of them, looking down, saw that a wan-

dering calf was chewing at his new jacket, which he had left on the ground with nuts in the pocket. They hurried down and chased the calf over half of the common before they recovered the jacket. Then the owner was afraid to go home with the damaged garment, but the other, a valorous comrade, volunteered to go with him and by his presence mitigate the anticipated reproof. He gave such an amusing narrative of the adventure with the calf that reproof was out of the question, and the mother of the unfortunate boy said: "Never mind, Henry, I can cut off the other corner to match, and make it look all right."

On another occasion a nutting-party was broken up by a singular occurrence. It was Saturday afternoon when a water-spout came in from the lake and ran up the river till it broke against the falls. It was a most ominous appearing affair, like the wraith of a desolating storm. The boys in the trees, happy with their harvest, saw it with amazement. They quickly came down from the trees, abandoned everything, and ran for home. One of them said it was "like a great sword coming down from heaven." "Yes," exclaimed another, "and it means no good to this city."

We were wonderfully endowed with the fruits of the air. Besides the chestnuts, there were hickory nuts, butternuts, hazel nuts, raspberries, blackberries, and wild grapes in their season—all within our reach in the limits of that noble playground. And then the orchards—oh! the orchards of that fruitful region. What are milk and honey in comparison with apples, pears, peaches, plums, apricots and cherries?

Our playground had still another notable feature. This was the Erie Canal, which bounded the common on the west. Our school geography told us it was the longest canal in the world. It was very pretty to see the packet, "Red Bird," with its gleaming white sides and its crimson window-blinds, go by every afternoon taking home to Brockport and other villages passengers who had been visiting or transacting business in Rochester. It was drawn by three horses tandem, always going at a round trot. Boats that it met or overtook must drop their towlines to let it pass over; and the ladies and gentlemen who sat on the deck, reading, musing, gossiping, or dozing, were sometimes startled by the cry "Low bridge!"—but never by "High towline!"—for at

her prow the packet carried a sharp iron, curved like a sickle, and if any careless driver had not stopped his horses and dropped his towline, it would have been cut in two. We boys always hoped to witness that feat, looking upon the packet as the modern representative of those seythe-armed chariots which we had read about in Bloss's "Ancient History." But somehow no towline ever was cut, and no dignified old gentlemen with their gold-headed canes ever were swept from the deck. Youth has its disappointments, as well as its triumphs.

I think many of the boatmen had not forgotten that they were once boys, for they were good-natured and sympathetic. They did not care if we dropped from a bridge and lighted on the deck, and rode a mile or two, talking to the helmsman and enjoying the scenery. Then we could drop from another bridge, upon a boat going in the opposite direction, and so be taken home. There was no Rialto spanning our canal, and no historic palaces lined its banks; but there were pleasant corn-fields and grassy meadows, orchards, farmsteads, shady groves and grazing cattle. For architecture, we had to be content with Jones's boat-yard (where once an iron boat was built, before the days of the "Merrimac" and "Monitor"), Milliner's boat-yard and great stone saw mill, the stave machine, Lindley Murray Moore's big cooper-shop, Bauer's brewery, and the Four-Mile Grocery.

In winter, when the season of navigation was over, there was always a breadth of ice-carpeting in the bottom of the canal; and as the banks shielded us from the wind, this made a delightful road for a long excursion on skates.

In the summer twilight we frequently heard the strains that some amateur violinist on a freight-boat sent across the landscape: and to us this was quite as romantic as any that might have come from a black-draped gondola.

Our noble playground, which I have tried to describe, included an area of about one square mile, and we improved our opportunities to the utmost. It never occurred to us to reflect that there were millions of boys who had not one-tenth of our facilities for enjoyment; but as I think of it now I believe there is not another square mile on this earth that contains such a variety of things that contribute to a boy's happiness. Ours fur-

nished innocent revelry for youth and golden remembrance for approaching age.

Rochester has recently extended a long arm and taken in the village of Charlotte, with its harbor, its lighthouse, and its beach and lake view; and I hope it has not lost that quiet look of elegant contentment which rested upon it in the days of which I have been speaking. This reminds me that we boys occasionally went on skates in winter, or by rowboat in summer, fishing along the way, reasonably happy whether the fish seconded our motion or not, as we drifted down the enchanted river.

Shenstone, the English poet, nearly two centuries ago, scratched these famous lines on the window of an inn:

“Whoe’er has traveled life’s dull round,
Where’er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.”

And Dr. Sam Johnson borrowed the idea and translated it into his peculiar stately prose—thus: “There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.” In our day there was something on the strand at Charlotte—the only structure on those yellow sands—which was not exactly an inn, but had the principal charms of one. It has been described very literally and completely in certain verses, which, with your permission, I will read to you.

Mart M’Intyre’s Kiosk

The Strand, Charlotte. Nineteenth Century.

Friends of my youth, roll back with me the burden of our years,
And far into the olden time our boyish steps shall fare.
Down by the margin of the lake a sandy beach appears—
Mart McIntyre’s kiosk we see, and Mart himself is there.

As Venus rose from out the foam, so did that temple rise
From out Ontario’s rolling surf, one fragment at a time,
While Mart took in the driftwood and hailed each plank a prize—
The contributions of the wrecks from many a land and clime.

With his own hands he builded up a structure most unique,

The inspiration of the hour his only plan in mind.

Its style was neither Gothic nor Byzantine nor Greek—

To rank him first of Cubists I've lately been inclined.

With one plank nailed on upright, the next he spiked across;

The third one slanted this way, the fourth one slanted that;

And some were gaily painted, some were draped with fern and
moss:

The roof was partly very steep and partly very flat.

Four windows let the sunshine in, but kept out cold and rain;

And one was round, of colored glass, and one of diamond shape;

While two were square, but different in size of sash and pane;

And over all a rusty pipe to let the smoke escape.

The door upon two hinges turned, one leather and one brass,

Amusingly mismated like the rest of that strange pile;

But what cared we who thereby to the inner shrine did pass?—

Not Milton's golden-hinged doors our steps could more beguile.

For there were cakes, with harmless ale in heavy bottles held—

To cut the string and hear it pop was not the least of joys—

And eggs and pies and gingerbread the dainty menu swelled:

And there serene sat McIntyre, our Mart, the friend of boys.

The counter was a cabin door: the table was a hatch,

Whereon some idle sailor-boy had drawn a checker-board;

And there in dark and rainy days we played a friendly match

Beneath a wooden chandelier, and little triumphs scored.

When fish were scaree, or would not bite, or sun too hot would
shine,

Or sudden lightning, wind and rain would drive us to the shore,
All willingly we moored our barque, wound up the useless line,

Found welcome in the rough kiosk, and had content galore.

Nor mere material joys alone in that retreat we found;
For Mart was wise in many ways and could a tale unfold
Of sailors slain on bloody decks or swept away and drowned,
Of mermaids round the coral isles, of pirate's buried gold.

The stream still flows, the surf still beats along the sounding shore;
But that kiosk no longer stands upon the sandy plain,
While Mart, the host and architect, can welcome us no more,
And of those happy youngsters you and I alone remain.

Mart McIntyre, Mart McIntyre, how often in my dreams
I find again your old kiosk, just as it used to be:
And through a rift in yonder cloud you sit in state, meseems,
Presiding o'er a new kiosk beside the Jasper Sea.

There were other playgrounds in Rochester, one of which, very small in comparison with that which I have described, but large enough for its purpose, interested me then because of its peculiarity, and has interested me in later years because I now know it was used by a literary genius.

In those days the paper-mill at the Lower Falls was owned by the firm of Stoddard & Freeman. Mr. Stoddard lived in Frank Street, two blocks from my home in the same street. His was a broad-fronted, white house, Number 26, and he had a large side-yard. In this yard his son, Charles Warren Stoddard (about my age), and his choicest young friends found their highest enjoyment. They had a tent and flags, with a drum and fife and a cannon, and in the shady corner a bucket of lemonade. They also had what we called euphemistically, flying horses. You would not have suspected them of being horses, but that was their name—as the boarding-house keeper said of the apple pie. Imagine two long planks, crossed at right angles and fastened together, and at the center of the crossing a hole as large as your thumb. Plant a strong post, about three feet out of the ground, with an iron bolt projecting from its top. Balance your planks on this, and your horses are ready for the riders. Four riders sit astride the ends of horses—I mean the planks—facing the center. One or two other boys enter the angles near the post,

and revolve the team—slowly at first, then with an accelerating motion, while the riders cling more and more tenaciously to the plank where they grasp its edges. If they are good riders they smile at the vain expenditure of centrifugal force; if not, they may be unhorsed.

With all this paraphernalia those happy boys disported themselves every pleasant afternoon; so that—as Magsman would express it—a juvenile circus performed there unceasing.

The paper-mill firm became bankrupt, and Mr. Stoddard took his family to California. Charles Warren Stoddard became a reporter and writer for a San Francisco paper and was familiar with that group of literary men of whom Bret Harte is the best known. But the wanderlust was in his blood, and there before him was the wide Pacific where to choose. He went in sailing vessels to Hawaii, to Tahiti, to Samoa—loafing, dreaming, writing, and making an acquaintance with that romantic world that surpassed any knowledge of it that came to Herman Melville or Robert Louis Stevenson. Some years later, as correspondent of a San Francisco paper, he visited Egypt and the Levant. He died in California in 1909.

Stoddard's finest work is a volume of prose essays entitled "South-Sea Idyls." For the new edition—published by Scribner—Mr. Howells wrote an introduction, in which he said: "One does these things but once, if one ever does them, but you have done them once for all; no one need ever write of the South Seas again.* * * Now I hope the whole English-reading world will recognize in your work the classic it should have known before."

There is not time to read one of those delicious essays here; but the very titles almost take us to that far-off island world. "Chumming with a Savage," "A Fete-day in Tahiti," "The Night-Daneers of Waipio," "A Canoe-eruise in the Coral Sea," "The Chapel of the Palms," "Pearl-hunting in the Pomotous," "A Prodigal in Tahiti."

He wrote also a few poems, a collection of them was published in New York last year. Let me read two short ones. The first is entitled "The Cocoa Tree."

Cast on the water by a careless hand,
Day after day the winds persuaded me;
Onward I drifted till a coral tree
Stayed me among its branches, where the sand
Gathered about me, and I slowly grew,
Fed by the constant sun and the inconstant dew.

The sea-birds build their nests against my root,
And eye my slender body's horny case;
Widowed within this solitary place,
Into the thankless sea I cast my fruit;
Joyless I thrive, for no man may partake
Of all the store I bear and harvest for his sake.

No more I heed the kisses of the morn;
The harsh winds rob me of the life they gave;
I watch my tattered shadow in the wave,
And hourly droop and nod my crest forlorn,
While all my fibres stiffen and grow numb
Beck'ning the tardy ships, the ships that never come.

The other is entitled "A Rhyme of Life."

If life be as a flame that death doth kill,
Burn, little candle, lit for me,
With a pure flame, that I may rightly see
To word my song, and utterly
God's plan fulfill.

If life be as a flower that blooms and dies,
Forbid the cunning frost that slays
With Judas kiss and trusting love betrays;
Forever may my song of praise
Untainted rise.

If life be as a voyage, foul or fair,
Oh, bid me not my banners furl
For adverse gale or wave in angry whirl,
Till I have found the gates of pearl
And anchored there.

When you are making a list of your Rochester authors—as some day you will—do not forget to add the name of Charles Warren Stoddard. And if you arrive at the fashion—already rife elsewhere—of putting up historic tablets, you may place one for him on the building No. 96 State Street: for he told me he was born there. His father's firm had its office and storehouse there, and the Stoddard family temporarily occupied an upper floor, before they took the house in Frank Street. His name may be worthily listed with those of Henry O'Reilly, Robert A. Wilson and Breck Perkins, your historians; Lewis H. Morgan and Karl Gilbert, your scientists; Jenny Marsh Parker and Harry Keenan, your novelists; Lucy Ellen Guernsey, your writer for the young; George H. Ellwanger and Charles Mulford Robinson, your essayists; Joseph O'Connor, your poet; Asahel C. Kendriek and Augustus H. Strong, your religious authors—and others whose names will readily occur to you.

That same Frank Street was well endowed with a variety of talent. Among its residents when I lived there as a boy were two skilled typographers, master printers, Ezra R. Andrews and William H. Beach; two eminent physicians, Drs. Gilkeson and Whitbeck; a Mayor and Congressman, John Williams; an enthusiastic entomologist, Robert Bunker; a practical botanist, Joseph B. Fuller; and a faultless painter, whose masterpiece was a silken banner, to be carried in a gala-day procession by Public School No. 5. The teachers who designed it wished it to bear a picture of the Earth rolling in clouds, and for a model they lent the artist the school globe. He painted it to the very life, with wonderful exactness—not only the globe, but the mahogany frame with its four legs and the brass circle, standing upright in the clouds. The banner was borne in the procession and then hung as a trophy on the wall of the school-room. When I called the principal's attention to the queerness of it, he gave it a critical look and then said. "Ye-e-s, perhaps it would look a little more airy if the frame had been omitted."

Lewis Swift, the astronomer, who made his own telescope and discovered so many comets that he glutted the market with them, lived around the corner, just out of Frank Street. I felt some pride when he let me look through his telescope, but more when he told me that my father was the best teacher he ever had.

I learned a little something from each of these gifted gentlemen, and I now think of them collectively as the Frank Street faculty.

Closely allied with writers are inventors, who are authors writing on wood and metal, with steam, light and electricity for ink. You know all about Mr. George Eastman and his brood of kodaks that have wandered over the whole habitable globe. Perhaps you don't know much about Merritt Gally, a Rochester boy, who was a remarkable inventor and took out more than four hundred patents. He was my classmate in college. When the University desired to announce its patriotism by displaying the United States flag, he said to the students, "You furnish the material, and I will make the flag." And he did make it, a large and beautiful one, on his sewing machine. He had learned the printer's trade, and then became an engraver, first making his own tools, and thus earned the money to get an education. His first invention, which was made in Rochester, was a printing-press that in some respects was superior to all others; and subsidiary to this he invented a considerable number of tools and mechanical appliances. He made important improvements in the construction of self-playing musical instruments, especially by applying pneumatic devices. Minor improvements in electric and telegraphic instruments were followed by his most remarkable achievement, multiplex telegraphy. At the end of a year of close study and careful experiment, he was able to send two messages on one wire at the same time. When this was published, through his patent, Mr. Edison took it up and doubled it, so that four messages could be sent at once. Almost any one could balance an ostrich egg after Columbus had shown how to do it with a hen's egg. Dr. Gally—he had received the degree of Doctor of Science from his alma mater—died in Brooklyn two years ago. He was the son of a Presbyterian minister.

If any of you ever have attended a ball game, you must have observed that the most important element in the play was the variable curved line in which the ball traveled after it left the hand of the pitcher. This, you may be proud to know, was a Rochester invention. When base ball was standardized and became rife, it was an amateur game. Professional playing came later. In Rochester there were several clubs that played once a week

on pleasant afternoons. The three principal ones were the Flour City, the Live Oak, and the Lone Star. The Live Oak had defeated every thing until it played a match with the Lone Star. Then the Lone Star pitcher, Richard Bradfield Willis, to the astonishment and disgust of the Live Oaks and their admirers, delivered the ball, not in straight lines, but in varying curves. Loud were the protests and most vociferously repeated, till the fifth inning was reached, when the game was stopped and a decision on the fairness of such pitching was demanded. The umpire was John W. Stebbins, a well known and able lawyer. As the players gathered around him, all talking at once, and around them a ring of their partisans, and around them a rapidly thickening mass of curious spectators, the crowd became a mob, the shouting and howling were deafening, the umpire was bewildered, either not knowing how to decide, or not daring to decide at all. He looked about for the weakest place in the ring, broke through it, leaped the fence, and was taken into the carriage of a friend, which immediately drove away.

This was only one more instance of a revolutionary invention encountering fierce opposition when first exploited.

I think this was also the first time that a base-ball umpire was mobbed. So, if you choose, you can boast of that also as a Rochester invention.

The battle-ground was at Caledonia avenue and Troup Street.

At the time of my boyhood, the popular entertainments included panoramas and dioramas. The panorama was a ribbon of canvas six or eight feet wide and very long, painted either with separate pictures or one continuous picture. It was mounted on upright rollers, and passed slowly by an opening in the curtain, showing a square at a time. The most successful was John Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River, which was three miles long and represented the whole length of that stream. Some of the boys caught the fever and painted and mounted small panoramas, which they exhibited, at popular prices.

But our great delight was the diorama—which might be described as a magnified puppet-show—and the chief of these was the Diorama of the Burning of Moscow. This came annually to Rochester for several years. My chum, Teddy, and I, having seen it from our seats in Corinthian Hall, were curious to get in-

side of it and learn its construction and working. The performance required the services of the proprietor and his wife and thirteen boys. One day Teddy came running into our yard and called out to me, "The Burning of Moscow has come to town, and I've got places for you and me!" At the proper hour that evening, we, with eleven others, presented ourselves at the stage door of Corinthian Hall. The only ones that I knew or now remember among the others were George Adams (always called Teddy Adams), afterward an eminent ball-player, and Robert Vaughan, who was learned in all the wisdom of Frankfort. The diorama was a complicated machine; but that artistic couple, after briefly instructing the boys, made it move like clockwork. Teddy, my Teddy, was intrusted with a large Chinese gong, which he struck at solemn intervals. That was the tolling of the great bell in the Kremlin. Vaughan ground a hand organ. That was the magnificent instrument in the Cathedral, performing its own requiem. In the midst of the city there was a high bridge of nearly a dozen arches, and I was placed on a low seat behind one of the abutments, slowly and steadily turning a crank to make an interminable army of artillery, infantry and cavalry cross the bridge. As the successive units reached the farther side, Teddy Adams carried them around to Mrs. Diorama (or whatever her name was), and she placed them again on the moving belt that was hidden by the parapet. At intervals the proprietor stepped to an ingenious machine of his own invention, gave the crank a few quick turns, and platoon firing by infantry was very perfectly imitated. All the domes and spires had hinges in their backs, and as the illumination increased, one after another they were made to topple over into the flames. At the close, the proprietor slid into the city, on the pavement of the main street, a long, narrow board. In this, at intervals, were hollows, and in each hollow some chemical which would burn with a colored flame. When he touched fire at one end the flames shot up with a weird and ghastly glare, exhibiting all the colors of the rainbow, and then the curtain came down. Perhaps Moscow will be burned again—who knows?

One of the best known of our lawyers, in the early days, published a book entitled "The Mysteries of Rochester." I believe they were all fictitious. But the story of the murder at the Long

White Bridge—as the wooden bridge at Andrews Street was called—affected my nerves somewhat when, a very small boy, I had to cross that bridge to get brewer's yeast. I used to cultivate heroism by telling my mother I would as lief go for yeast as not—and saying not a word about that hypothetical murder.

But there really was an interesting mystery that came to Rochester at intervals, and I had a startling encounter with it. One evening I was sent on an errand to the extreme eastern section of the city. When I had made about half of the journey the sky suddenly was darkened and a great thunder-storm came up. As I saw no use in turning back, I kept on. I was in East Avenue, near Meigs Street, when I heard the sound of a horn blown violently, alternated with loud and fierce utterances. It was approaching me rapidly in the darkness. When it was but a few steps from me, a flash of lightning revealed a man of medium size, with a handsome face and long hair curled in ringlets. He wore a soft hat with a broad brim, an open collar, and a short frock coat. His horn was slung from his shoulder with a tasseled cord, and he walked very rapidly. As he passed me he blew a terrific blast close to my ear, and then as he receded he was loudly denouncing our city with something that sounded like the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. That was the Angel Gabriel. He always said so himself. His travels took him far afield, and he was killed by a mob in Venezuela.

Before steam fire engines were invented, the performances of the hand-engines furnished much entertainment for the boys. When a fire broke out, all the church bells in the city were rung wildly, because each sexton was paid a dollar for ringing. Everybody was excited, and almost everybody ran to the fire. There were seven companies in the city. Each company, with a long, double drag-rope, drew its machine to the fire, always on a keen run. When the supply of water was distant from the fire, a line was formed, and one engine sent the water through its hose to the next, which in turn forced its way along. They all had numbers and names. Red Rover Three could "wash" any other engine, that is, could pour the water into its box faster than it could pass the stream along. But Zack Weaver, foreman of Torrent Two, could liek any other foreman. This will enable you to understand the interest that the boys took in the Fire Department and

its powers. Celebration of the Fourth of July always began with a trial of the engines before the court house. They endeavored to throw their streams over the head of the Goddess of Justice, and sometimes they succeeded.

The first time that Teddy and I put on our best toggery in honor of the day and went down to witness the great hydraulic feat, we found the plaza filled with spectators, the pavement wet, and on it coils of distended hose winding about among the crowd, while shouts were going up with the great streams, like incense to the serene Goddess. We had found a good place from which to see our favorite engine surpass the others, when a section of hose directly under us burst. We went home at once, and did the remainder of our celebrating in every-day dress.

Rochester, in times past, was a variegated publication center. Besides its daily papers, it had two agricultural journals, one horticultural, an anti-slavery paper, and the official organ of the Adventists, commonly called Millerites.

When the Advent Harbinger was established, my Teddy and I, who had frequented printing-offices and picked up bits of the trade, were asked to fold the first issue. It was handsomely printed on good, clear paper, and the edition was two thousand. We folded it beautifully, I assure you—corner exactly on corner, and all seams smoothed down nicely. When the job was finished, the proprietor expressed his satisfaction with it, but said he could not pay us till Saturday. That day Teddy went to the office, and came back saying, “I got the pay, but I had to take it all in pennies.” Then he showed more than a double handful of the old-fashioned copper cents.

That was our first experience in the noble art of journalism. In later practice I learned that, by universal rule, the compensation of the journalist may be measured by small coins.

As I arrive at the close of this discursive talk, I am reminded of Sculptor Greenough's signature. When he had finished the statue of Washington, instead of putting the usual Latin word *fecit* (has done it) after his name, he modestly used the imperfect tense of the verb, with the conative signification: Horatio Greenough *faciebat*—Horatio Greenough tried to do it. I fear I have only imperfectly succeeded in picturing boy life as I knew it in this enchanted city. But I have tried to do it.

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Rossiter Johnson.

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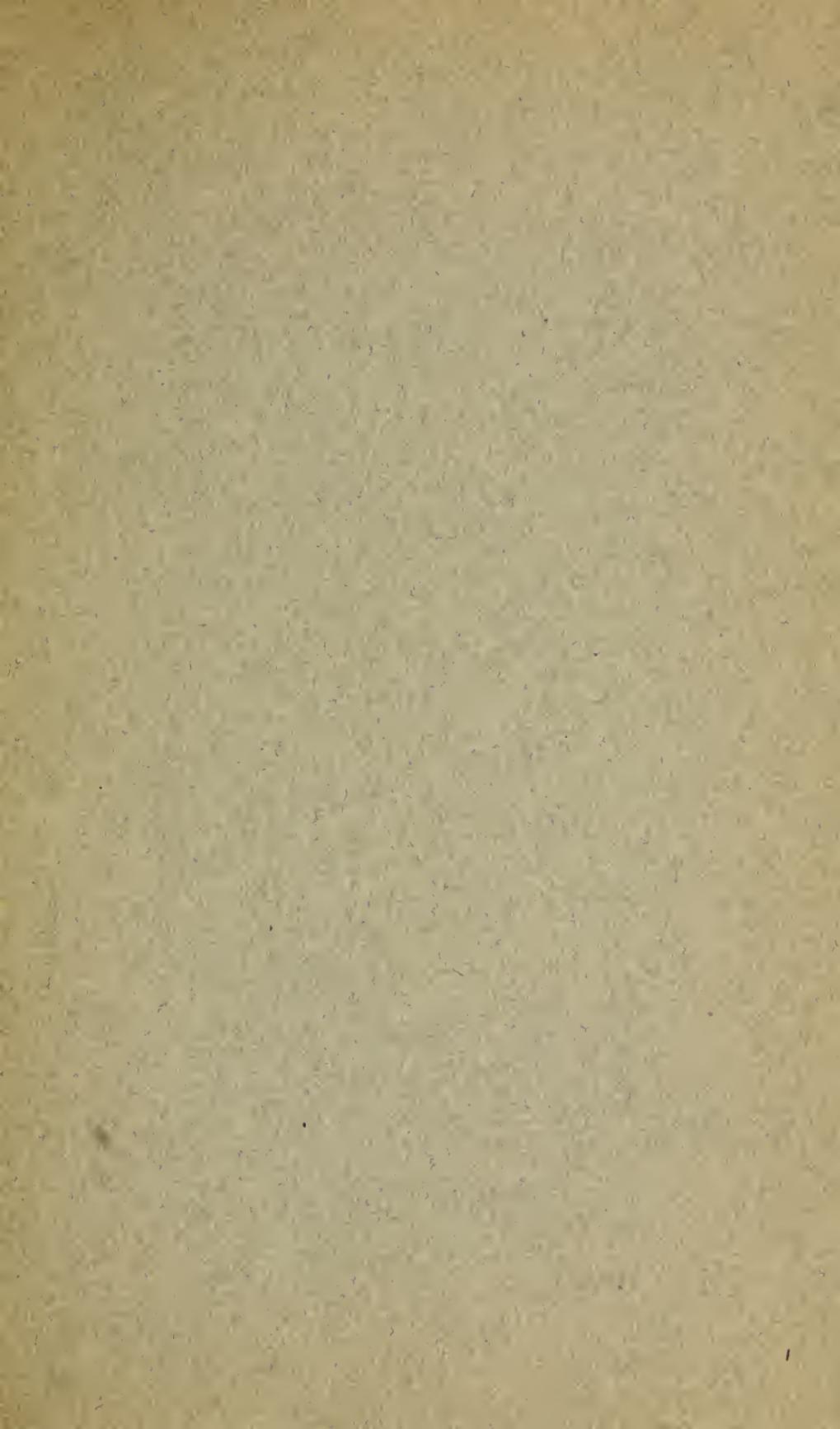
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